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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

June 15, 2005

* Mr. WOLF. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, I rise to engage in a colloquy with the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the chairman of the subcommittee, and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER) on an important issue regarding democracy in Venezuela.

Mr. Chairman, 2 weeks ago, several Members of Congress went to Venezuela and heard about the intimidation by the Venezuelan Government of a democracy advocate named Maria Corina Machado. Ms. Machado is the leader of Sumate, a Venezuelan non-governmental electoral watchdog. Currently, she is charged by the Venezuelan Government for accepting illicit foreign financial contributions from our own National Endowment For Democracy.

Recently, Ms. Machado was invited to the White House to see the President and share her concerns about the endangered state of democracy in Venezuela. This Congress should stand behind Ms. Machado and support the growth of democracy in Venezuela.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS).

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WOLF. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Chairman, I concur with the gentleman's interpretation of the difficult situation in Venezuela. Sumate has been one Venezuelan institution that has been willing and able to monitor the anti-democratic behavior of the Venezuelan Government. It has been able to bring the attention of the world to the decline in democracy in that country.

Mr. Chairman, this Congress should be supporting democratic institutions in Venezuela and those individuals fighting on the side of democracy. Does the gentleman from Virginia agree?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, I do. I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER) for their statements and leadership.

I think by their speaking today it sends a message to the world with regard to the importance of us promoting democracy and freedom in Venezuela. Democracy and human rights, whether it be in Venezuela or any place else, are basic fundamental freedoms that must always be preserved and supported.

The United States should always stand with those fighting for those freedoms. The United States should continue to send a clear message to everyone that we will stand with people like Ms. Machado and others like her who speak out for democracy.

I think what the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER) have done is send a message to the world. They have sent a message to the National Endowment

For Democracy that when there is another grant application, that application should be met so she has that opportunity for freedom.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WOLF. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, moving to one other matter, it is my understanding that the 2006 Science, State, Justice and Commerce Appropriations bill requires agencies to notify the Committee on Appropriations 15 days before funds are reprogrammed to implement e-government initiatives.

As the chairman of the authorizing committee with jurisdiction over the E-Government Act, and in fact I was one of the authors of the E-Government Act, I would ask the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) if he will share information that he obtains with the Committee on Government Reform on the funding and implementation of e-government initiatives in this bill so we could be so advised.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, yes, I would be happy to provide the Committee on Government Reform with information received from the administration regarding e-government initiatives.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. CHOCOLA

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 1 offered by Mr. CHOCOLA: Page 108, after line 7, insert the following:

TITLE VIII—ADDITIONAL GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 801. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to employ any individual under the title "artist in residence".

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of June 14, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CHOCOLA) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CHOCOLA).

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for his good work on this bill. I also appreciate the opportunity to offer this amendment.

This amendment is really about prioritizing spending and fiscal responsibility. Over the last 2 years, NASA has spent \$20,000 for an artist-in-residence program. My amendment is designed to prevent or limit that practice in the future.

Mr. Chairman, nowhere in NASA's mission does it say anything about advancing fine arts or hiring a performance artist. In fact, Laurie Anderson, the person that was chosen to perform the role of a performance artist, when she was called to be offered the job, she said, Sure, what do I do?

And the response she got from NASA was, Well, we do not know; we have never done this before.

One of the first things that I did in 2003 after I showed up as a new Member of Congress is I attended a memorial service for the Columbia astronauts. Certainly, spending money by NASA on a performance artist and a artist-in-residence program does nothing to make sure that the shuttle program gets back into space and prevents such tragedies in the future.

Now \$20,000 may not seem like much in the Hall of Congress; but to the average American family, it is a significant amount of money. I wish I could say that NASA is boldly wasting taxpayer money where no agency has wasted it before, but I am afraid that the artist-in-residence program is just a symptom of a bigger problem.

Recently, the Heritage Foundation identified \$386 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse in government spending. Every American business and every American family must make hard decisions to stand by their budget and eliminate wasteful funding, and the Federal Government should be no different and NASA should not be spending taxpayer dollars on a performance artist. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CHOCOLA. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, I think this is a good amendment and I accept it.

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, I rise not in opposition, I am going to agree to the amendment, but I would like to have some comment before I do.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is a regrettable amendment for a number of reasons.

First of all, it involves an awfully little bit of money. Secondly, I think it sends a really bad signal. Indeed, one of NASA's missions is to inspire; and it has had an arts program, a very small arts program since 1962. Such luminaries as Norman Rockwell have participated in it over the years.

It is in furtherance of part of NASA's mission. NASA's mission is to inspire, to educate. Indeed, in the education theme of NASA's FY 2006 budget, it states: "To develop the next generation of explorers, NASA must do its part to inspire and motivate students to pursue careers in science and technology and engineering and in mathematics."

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A part of it is connectivity. One of the ways NASA has done that, if anyone has visited its facilities, is through beautiful murals and other art initiatives. This particular initiative that the gentleman is speaking to is the appointment of Laurie Anderson as an

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